

# Upper Yuba River Studies Program Rocklin Public Meeting

September 8, 1999  
7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

## Transcript of Question and Response Session

**Participants:** Terry Mills – CALFED  
Dave Munro – Skippers Cove Marina  
Shawn Garvey – South Yuba River Citizens League  
Charlie Alpers – U.S. Geological Survey  
Kevin Goishi – PG&E  
Jen Carville – Friends of the River  
Les Nicholson – Nevada Irrigation District  
Bonnie Nixon – Public Affairs Management -- Meeting Facilitator

**QUESTION:** PG&E and the Nevada Irrigation District (NID) have invested in water resource infrastructure on the Yuba River system, some of which conveys water supplies to cities and open space in Placer County. How will the people, businesses, industry and environment in Placer County be assured that nothing will undermine or diminish any Yuba River water supplies to Placer County as a direct or indirect result of the outcome or actions of this study at any time in the future as our water needs grow?

**ANSWER:** Generally, I think within this forum, most of the stakeholders agree that anyone impacted by the project should be kept whole. I think part of the study is to evaluate and quantify what those impacts are and then try to figure out how to keep those interests whole. We will be discussing new water and power, as well as replacement power.

**QUESTION:** Does CALFED feel that protecting any amount of fish habitat, justifies burning 5,400,000 gallons of oil, or any other non-renewable resource per year, or any non-renewable resource? In addition, if Englebright is removed what effective power generation will Bullard's Bar suffer?

**ANSWER:** In answer to the first part, these are the type of questions that we need to answer in order for CALFED to make an informed decision on this whole process. There are probably at least 50 or 100 questions like yours that should be considered. Certainly, we're not

able to equate fish or fish habitat to a gallon of oil, but those questions need to be discussed in the feasibility resolution phase.

What we're looking at is large economic climate in California being constrained by the presence of endangered species. We do have the opportunity to reverse this trend or take species off the endangered species list to free-up water for economic purposes, including agriculture and urban use. There's already a large economic impact caused by the increasing number of endangered species. One of CALFED's goals, is to reverse that trend not only on a regional basis, but a much larger statewide basis.

**ANSWER:** In this area we're probably talking about three different groups of generation assets that will be impacted by this decision. We won't know what the impacts will be for PG&E's Drum Spaulding Project or NID's Yuba Bear Project until we have an understanding of how much water is needed from those areas. Those projects will be directly impacted by the effect on out of basin diversions. It will most likely reduce their generation outputs. Until there is an understanding of what the feasible alternatives are, the impacts to PG&E's Narrows I and Yuba County Water Agency's Narrows II at Englebright are unknown. The decision on whether Englebright stays or goes will determine those impacts.

The third group of generation assets is Colgate. Colgate is upstream on the north fork of the Yuba River below Bullard's Bar. It is very likely that if an anadromous fish goes up the Yuba River and into the Upper Yuba River Watershed, Colgate's Bullard's Bar operation will change from a load following a peaking, highly variable output plant, to a fairly base load plant. The total output probably won't change, but the impacts to the benefits to the transmission system and grid stability voltage will need to be assessed as part of this study.

**QUESTION:** Why was there such a poor turn-out for last night and today's meetings?

**ANSWER:** Paid advertisements were printed in the Yuba/Marysville Appeal Democrat, the Sacramento Bee, the Auburn Journal, and the Nevada City/Grass Valley Union two weeks ago and then again on a day or two before these meetings. The editors of each of those papers also received press releases.

In addition, 250 newsletters and press releases were mailed out to news organizations on the project mailing list. The newsletter went out to over 20,000 people and organizations. The mailing list will eventually be pared down to responding or participating parties.

**QUESTION:** There is a concern that the Workgroup up to this point, is not an open meeting and therefore what is the purpose if we're not keeping the general public informed?

**ANSWER:** Let me give you a little bit of history on how we got to where we are today. We started at loggerheads. We had two public meetings that were informative but involved screaming matches. It became apparent that with over 300 people in a room shouting their opinions, we wouldn't get very far.

The meetings did show that there was a lot of concern from many people. Meeting participants told us who should be involved in this process, and with a great deal of thought and deliberation, phone calls, and personal contacts we generated 52 people for the study Workgroup (split into three Teams). The leaders of those Teams are Terry, Shawn and myself. These are obviously, three totally different points of view. The question we had to ask ourselves was, "how can we make use of the information and misinformation to make something beneficial?"

We decided to divide the Workgroup into three teams, with a very broad based representation. These teams worked together as one Workgroup to define and answer the issues. I think we've done it with difficulty, but effectively. We promised you at Penn Valley and at Olivehurst we would publicly tell you what we've done.

We're now in the process of telling you where we are at five public meetings and through our first newsletter. This is obviously a collaborative effort and what you're seeing is the frosting on the cake. You're not seeing all the mistakes that were covered up. We had a difficult time getting here, so it's important that the public is involved. I'm a member of the public.

These two public meetings have indicated that maybe we're not effectively involving the public, but we must proceed with this process. CALFED offers us an opportunity to participate in an open-ended, true study of at the issues surrounding this project. If you feel that we're doing something wrong or someone is not represented, please tell Terry, Shawn, or me. If you don't feel comfortable telling one of us, tell Bonnie.

**QUESTION:** Why are there 11 representatives on the Lake and River Teams?

**ANSWER:** The teams are officially 11 and 11. We started with a large amount of dislike and mistrust. It was immediately apparent that Shawn and I

needed to have the same number of representatives, votes and consensus people. Terry speaking from the Agency's point of view, sometimes needed more or less on his team.

Because consensus is our main objective, Shawn and I established some rules and agreements on determining consensus and what to do if it is not reached?

If we can't get consensus, we will go to Plan 2. Plan 2 is the point that the agreement can be modified to, obtain consensus either by starting over or bring it to a vote. There are only 22 people who can vote, 11 members on the River Team and 11 members on the Lake Team. The Agency doesn't have a vote.

We've created one joint Workgroup, along with the independent teams.

**QUESTION:** What impact will the passage of SB 496, the Wild and Scenic River Designation, have on the Englebright process?

**ANSWER:** The question assumes SB 496 will pass, after working on it for the past eight months nothing is certain. If it does pass, I believe that Englebright will not be impacted. Many Lake Team and Agency Team members, have either no position on SB 496 or are opposed to the bill, yet we're working together in this collaborative process quite successfully.

The Appeal Democrat and the Union indicate that some of the members on both sides are quite vocal in their opposition to one another even on other issues, such as SB 496, but on this issue (Englebright Dam) we're successfully working together.

**QUESTION:** How does the study program relate to ongoing watershed studies like SYRCL and the lower Yuba River activity?

**ANSWER:** SYRCL doesn't have any ongoing watershed studies. The perception in the newspaper that SYRCL receives government grants is false. We have applied for many grants, but we've never received any money from the state or federal government to do watershed studies. Therefore, we don't have grass roots organization financing, which means we operate on contributions from our 2,700 members and proceeds from our annual auction.

There are a number of watershed studies being done by state parks like, Tahoe National Forest, as well as the CALFED funded Bureau of Land Management on the south Yuba River area. There's a

Watershed Council for the entire upper Yuba River that has 26 signatories including NID, Nevada County, and SYRCL. For the lower Yuba River there is the Yuba River Fisheries Technical Work Group, which we're a member of, along with nine other organizations and agencies like Yuba County Water Agency, PG&E, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the Department of Fish and Game. As far as I know, those are the studies happening for the Yuba River.

**QUESTION:** Is anyone studying, or has it been considered in this study, whether an alteration in the current environment of Englebright Lake or any other lake, will adversely affect the indigenous species?

**ANSWER:** I don't know of any studies on that topic.

**QUESTION:** Has it been considered?

**ANSWER:** I think it is the intention to consider the potential affects in these studies.

Englebright Lake is included in the upstream habitat studies component. We are aware that there is a variety of warm water game fish that seem to thrive in Englebright Lake, and we are considering how the each of the options could affect those species.

**QUESTION:** Please consider that the lake is now hosting four generations of families that use the lake for recreational purposes. I would like to emphasize recreation as a category to be studied. If this process moves forward to completion, how many more salmon will be able to spawn in the Sacramento Valley? What is the projected percent increase in fish numbers?

**ANSWER:** That's a study question, because no one could possibly estimate that until more information is discovered. I believe, given the limited information I do know, that the lower Yuba River below the Englebright area, is commonly referred to as the largest wild fall run salmon and steelhead river in the central valley. As of last year, there are 30,000 fall run salmon, 2,000 wild steelhead, and between 200 to 500 spring run salmon.

This past year there was a Fish and Game study that used ladders at the downstream Daguerre Dam to trap salmon traveling upstream. Researchers clipped the salmon's fins to differentiate between those coming from hatcheries along the American or Feather rivers and those that are wild. It appears that only one or two percent of the fish in the Yuba River are coming from other rivers. Which probably

means that salmon are born in the Yuba River, go out to the ocean, and come right back to the Yuba River. I find that impressive.

**QUESTION:** At what point in the life cycle of spring run Chinook salmon are they considered threatened or endangered? Is it when they are in the ocean when they are fished by the thousands of tons, or is it when they are in the San Francisco Bay or Delta when they reach the rivers?

**ANSWER:** Spring run are considered endangered during all aspects of their life cycle, whether it's egg in the gravel, a young fish migrating to the ocean, an adult in the ocean, or returning back inland. Under the Endangered Species Act there are protective measures implemented for all life stages of these fish, including controls for water volume, water temperatures, harvest regulations inland, or harvest regulations in the ocean.

**QUESTION:** Why is the scope limited to the Englebright Dam? Certainly, if the salmon went above Englebright they also went as far as Bullard's Bar.

**ANSWER:** (Referring to a presentation slide) The Upper Yuba River Studies Program, the light blue area, is the primary study area. The language contained in the newsletter indicates that for some of these studies, the study area stretches from the top of the Sierra watershed down to and including the confluence of the Yuba and Feather Rivers in Marysville. So it is not true to characterize it only as Englebright Lake.

**QUESTION:** The salmon population is in much better shape in the Yuba River watershed than the American River or Feather River. Why are Folsom/Nimbus Dams and the Oroville Dam not included?

**ANSWER:** For this project, we're studying strictly the Yuba River. Certainly there is a large number of fall run Chinook salmon in the lower rivers, but when we analyze spring runs, there isn't a good population estimate. I think Shawn gave a range of 2 to 500 fish, although I think 500 might be a little bit high. Since it is difficult to get good steelhead population estimates, I'm not sure how an estimate of 2,000 steelhead was obtained.

There are only three or four self-sustained populations of spring run Chinook salmon in the Central Valley and they'll remain as endangered species until several criteria are met. Those criteria are as follows: greater individual self-sustained populations, a minimum population size of around 500 to 1,000 fish per individual population,

and the persistence through several generations. One of the ways to de-list the spring run salmon is to try and establish a stronger population on the Yuba River. As of right now, we don't know if that is a feasible option.

**QUESTION:** Why not make the dam taller to hold more cold water and expand the fish spawning areas below the dam and/or build a hatchery?

**ANSWER:** I will use Oroville Dam as an analogy. Historically, the Feather River had spring run Chinook salmon, and steelhead salmon in fall run. When Oroville Dam was constructed, the mitigation for preventing access to the upper headwater areas, was the development of hatcheries. As a result of hatchery propagation procedures, spring run Chinook salmon and fall run Chinook salmon were interbred. We have probably lost all of the spring run Chinook salmon in the Feather River in-lieu of hybrid fish.

We would anticipate that a similar situation could occur on the Yuba River. Hatchery practices and the way we culture fish makes this inevitable. Since it's very difficult to keep the stock separated and free from disease or genetic contamination, it's probably not a wise practice.

In terms of ecosystem restoration or endangered species, hatcheries don't apply in our studies. CALFED is making some recommendations to improve hatchery practices to minimize impacts on wild populations.

**QUESTION:** Will fish be trucked around Englebright as part of the feasibility studies in Phase II?

**ANSWER:** During the Feasibility Study phase, there won't be any fish moved above Englebright. We need to conduct habitat evaluations, which means walking the streams, taking water temperatures and depths, and observing various habitat attributes.

**QUESTION:** Why was the historical use of habitat not considered as a factor? Why were the fish returned if they never swam up the river?

**ANSWER:** The information is weak in this area. We have anecdotal records that some of the very early gold miners in the Downieville area had on occasion, caught spring run Chinook salmon or steelhead before all the hydraulic mining had occurred. Since there are a lot of other streams similar to the Yuba River that have identified populations, we believe it's very likely that there were at one time populations of spring run Chinook salmon and steelhead.

**QUESTION:** Are study options available for all reservoirs, or just for Englebright?

**ANSWER:** This study is focused on the Yuba River, so we're not studying any dams outside of the basin. We decided it would be unreasonable to consider moving fish above some of the upper river dams. The other dams in the basin were either too high to put fish above them.

**QUESTION:** I'm very concerned on the importance placed on fishery interests over property owner, recreational lake use, water storage and flood control interests for California's growing population. How does CALFED justify placing such a high value on fish?

**ANSWER:** This is a unique process that has a life of it's own. CALFED has many work groups and in almost all of these groups there's a very heavy CALFED involvement. In this particular process, there are 52 people involved including one full time CALFED representative, but CALFED is not directing this process.

CALFED's role is to manage the process and make sure that people remain receptive to communication. CALFED and all the other agencies are starting to notice that there are some very controversial issues and very divergent opinions, but everyone is willing to sit down and talk in a logical manner. In fact, the CALFED Policy Group which is comprised of the regional directors, or deputy directors from a variety of state and federal agencies, have recently invited Dave and Shawn to come to a CALFED Policy Group meeting to give them an update on this particular process.

These very influential people want to hear from them about how this process works and why it's working. CALFED will continue to have a lot of controversial issues, so they're looking for ways to bolster community involvement and ensure feedback opportunities for everyone. This will increase the probability of community support regarding final decisions.

**QUESTION:** What purpose are these studies and meetings serving if there won't be actual citizen voting? When the ultimate decisions are made by the Governor and Bruce Babbitt; with a known agenda for taking down dams?

**ANSWER:** It was previously mentioned that CALFED feels that they're not in control. Because you are writing, calling, and attending meetings, we're working very hard toward a favorable solution for both sides. We do not want to politicize this project.



If everyone that is spending time on this Workgroup, made a consensus recommendation to CALFED and it was ignored, I believe there would be a swift political solution.

**QUESTION:** Can you come up with an understandable statement of CALFED's goal of introducing salmon and steelhead to the upper Yuba River?

**ANSWER:** We would like to get spring run Chinook salmon and steelhead off the list of the state and federal endangered species. There is a further detailed description, but I will not read it here.

**QUESTION:** From a CALFED perspective, why was Englebright selected as the dam to study for decommissioning and where else is CALFED looking for a similar process?

**ANSWER:** CALFED is looking in a variety of locations at different size dams. Putting fish above Englebright is probably the most ambitious idea we've considered at this time. At Mill Creek we recently removed a significant 25 foot high dam that was a barrier to fish. On Butte Creek we've removed five or six smaller diversion dams and we're looking at a number of diversion dams for removal on the Calaveras River and some tributaries to the Delta.

In the near future, we may start a similar process on the Merced River and look at some of the medium size diversion dams in the upper section below very large dams. There's probably around 45 diversion structures, which we'll call dams, that will be studied in the longer term CALFED program.

**QUESTION:** Last night in San Jose, CALFED held a public meeting regarding future water needs in California. Apparently CALFED is studying the need for 12 more additional water storage areas. Why, then, is this segment of CALFED considering the option of removing an existing water storage lake such as Lake Englebright?

**ANSWER:** Right now CALFED has retained 12 potential reservoir sites as part of its evaluation. CALFED's intent is not to build 12 reservoirs, but determine through a very controversial screening process, which reservoirs we want to carry into the next phase of the overall CALFED program. For long-term water management in California, we may need 500,000 to 2,500,000 additional acre-feet of water to meet environmental, agricultural, and urban purposes.

By comparison, Englebright is not a water storage dam. It may provide, 25 to 45,000 acre-feet of water but CALFED needs many magnitudes greater than 45,000 acre-feet of water. For the local

community it's a very important source of water, but in the context of the CALFED solution area, it's a very small amount of water.

**QUESTION:** Is the 52 member Workgroup a different entity than the CALFED Policy Group, and if so, can the CALFED Policy Group override the recommendation of the Workgroup?

**ANSWER:** Yes they're different, and yes the Policy Group can override the Workgroup. The CALFED Policy Group is comprised of agency directors or deputy directors from the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fishery Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and others. They set policy and direction for the overall CALFED program. The purpose of this work group is to do is develop a series of recommendations to pass on to the CALFED Policy Group.

The CALFED Policy Group will seriously consider any recommendations that come out of this consensus group and would want to move them forward because they would be heavily influenced by a consensus recommendation from this group.

**QUESTION:** It seems that we're proposing major studies and potential projects regarding salmon that will cost a lot of money. What is the dollar amount CALFED estimates will be spent on these studies? How much money has CALFED allocated for the initial study over the next eighteen months?

**ANSWER:** As we move into the next phase of this process, we need to better define the actual feasibility studies that we're going to conduct. In the process of further defining those, we will include cost estimates. We can either spend a minimal amount of money for minimal results or have very expensive studies that give us a lot of information that we don't need. We need to be very specific on exactly defining the needed information and what it will cost.

We may find that the total amount of the studies is high or low. For the initial phase we have around \$500,000 for these studies, so it will probably be insufficient.

**QUESTION:** Have there been any studies started on the Edward's Crossing Dam removal in the State of Washington? Will this be a model for Englebright and are there any similar factors that we can learn from?

**ANSWER:** I'm not aware of that project.

**ANSWER:** It was a small dam, about 26 feet high and 190 feet across and as far as I know it was not done collaboratively. The hydro plant was actually condemned against the wishes of the owner.

**FACILITATOR:** We really want to thank you for your input.